

## Contributions

### THE EVILS OF COVETOUSNESS

RUBY C. TELLER

Tho we may covet in a good sense, it is more usual in a bad sense. To earnestly desire something that is good, to be eager to obtain wisdom, virtue and learning, is only right. "Covet earnestly the best gifts," I Cor. 12:31. This is the only reference to be found in the Scriptures where covetousness is commended. And yet, in the same verse Paul says, "and yet show I unto you a more excellent way;" explaining in the next chapter that if we have everything in the world besides and have not charity, it profiteth us nothing.

In a bad sense, covetousness is applied to an inordinate desire of wealth, greed of gain or avarice. Jesus said that from within, from the heart of man proceedeth all evil, including covetousness, and it will surely defile. God severely judges it, because it is really idolatry and we cannot serve God and mammon.

Plainly speaking, to covet means to wish for something that belongs to another. Sometimes we see a company of children standing at the window of a jeweler's store. One says "Oh! I wish I had that gold watch!" Another says, "I wish I had that beautiful diamond ring!" Those children do not think what they are doing; for these useless and foolish wishes may grow into a greater desire to get the things coveted. It leads to temptation and may even make a boy become a thief or a robber.

The highest authority declares "the love of money is the root of all evil." This love of money is the most usual form of covetousness. But few human beings seem to believe it, for they press on after it, continuing to illustrate the statement, without heeding its warning. The rush of the world is for money. Money is power, money is happiness, money is everything, and still such a perilous impulse to effort. Honor has its thousands of votaries; pleasure its tens of thousands; and fame is widely coveted; but money is sought as the means of compassing the whole. God means that we shall make money a blessing, and it is a curse only when its legitimate use is disregarded. Ah! the vanity of covetousness. Be not proud of riches but afraid of them lest they be a silver bar to cross the way to heaven. You must answer for riches but riches cannot answer for you.

Who, do you think, obtains the richer prize; the man whose mansions hold the miser's gold and worldling's pride, or he who finds heavenly peace a willing guest in his little, humble cot, and bears in his breast the earnest of treasures in the skies? The first fruits of the Spirit is an assurance to us of our future enjoy-

ment of God's favor and presence. "If riches increase, set not thy heart upon them." Ps. 62:10. A London merchant wrote down these four rules for his own guidance, and embodied them in his practice for fifty years: "If rich, be not too joyful in having; too solicitous in keeping; too anxious in increasing; nor too sorrowful in losing." The Lord gave him wealth and he used it well.

In all things return thanks and give glory to God for his everlasting goodness. To see our own glory is no glory at all. So much as we sacrifice to our own credit, to the dexterity of our hands, or the sagacity of our wit, we detract God. It is to be feared that we do not enough recognize God as the great Master-cultivator. Our harvest homes are times of rejoicing too, but I would that our tillers and reapers of the soil would as piously refer all to God as the Psalmist did. "Thou waterest the earth, thou greatly enrichest it, Thou preparest the corn, Thou warrest the ridges, Thou settlest the furrows, Thou makest it soft with showers, Thou blessest the springing thereof, Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness!" Not one word of man, of man's skill or of man's labor, not one thought of self. How different from him whose grounds brought forth abundantly and whose only thought was "I will say to my soul, Soul thou hast many goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, drink and be merry."

One writer says, "I was walking thro an orchard, looking about me, when I saw a low tree laden more heavily with fruit than the rest. On nearer examination, it appeared that the tree had been dragged to the very ground, and broken by the weight of its treasures. 'Oh!' said I, gazing on the tree, 'here lies one who has been ruined by his riches!'" When I see so many rich people as I do, caring so much for their bodies and so little for their souls, I pity them from the bottom of my heart and sometimes think there are as many ruined by riches as by poverty. They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare. The prayer will suit you perhaps as well as it does me; "Give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny Thee, and say Who is the Lord? or else I be poor and steal and take the name of my God in vain."

True contentment depends not upon what we have; a tub was large enough for Diogenes but a world was too little for Alexander. "Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee or forsake thee," Heb. 13:5. He is likeliest to find contentment who duly contemplates those blessings which God has placed within his reach. I've been a great deal happier since I have given up thinking what is easy and pleasant, and being discon-

tent because I couldn't have my own will. Our life is determined for us; and it makes the mind very free when we give up wishing and only think of bearing what is laid upon us, and doing what is given us to do. I have learned a little prayer and here commit it to others:

"Dear Lord, this day I would not spend  
In any other place,  
For Thou dost wish me here today,  
And resting in Thy grace, I am content.  
This duty I would not exchange  
For any other task:  
If only its performance please Thee, Lord,  
'Tis all I ask, I am content.  
I care not what may come to me  
Of earthly good or ill;  
Since where I am and what I do,  
Are ordered by Thy will, I am content."

Remember the promise, and don't be guilty of breaking the Tenth Commandment. It may be very hard, especially for a poor person, to see another possessing a great many luxuries and riches to not wish for some of them. God can and will help you keep the commandment he has given us. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." This is a fine proverb. Therefore never let a Christian murmur because he hath little, but rather let him be a blessing of that God that hath blessed his little, and doth bless his little, and will bless his little to him.

I must not turn with envious eyes,  
On aught that others may possess,  
Or wish whatever God denies  
To make their sum of blessings less.  
Is there, then, naught beneath, above,  
That I may covet to possess?  
Yes, there's a Savior's boundless love,  
With which he waits my soul to bless!  
To me, this treasure, Lord, impart;  
Thy pardoning grace, oh! let me prove;  
Write Thou Thy laws upon my heart,  
And make me covet all Thy love!

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### TRUE TESTIMONY

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President Weston of the Crozer Theological Seminary, referring to an experience of former years says: "I had preached for a Presbyterian congregation—possibly for a time the most noted congregation of that denomination in the city of New York. [Not Dr. John Hall's] My text was, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him.' The relations of the pastor and myself were such that I had frequently preached for the congregation. The sexton spoke to me as usual after the sermon, this time with the remark: 'You have given us an old-fashioned sermon today.' At a dinner table, where probably the most influential family in the church had gathered, the sermon was discussed. Said the mother: 'I do not want my children to hear such preaching as that.' When